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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
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PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/228 AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

RECENT ACTIONS OF INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND OTHER BODIES OF RELEVANCE TO THE PREPARATORY PROCESS

Letter dated 8 August 1991 from the Chairman of the Fourth South Pacific Regional Environment Programme Intergovernmental Meeting and the Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations Office in New York addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

The Fourth South Pacific Regional Environment Programme Ministerial Level Intergovernmental Meeting adopted the "Ministerial Declaration" on Environment and Development in the South Pacific, and the "South Pacific Regional Statement" to the Third Session of the UNCED Preparatory Committee, at Noumea, New Caledonia on 9 July 1991.

(Signed) Manasa Seniloli
Permanent Representative of
Fiji to the United Nations
Office in New York

Annex

MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

We, the Ministers and representatives of the 27 members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), meeting in Noumea from 8 to 9 July 1991,

Recalling the 1972 Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment, and reaffirming our continuing commitment to its principles; in particular, that international protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a cooperative spirit by all countries, big or small, on an equal footing,

Reaffirming the principles espoused in the 1982 Raratonga Declaration on the Human Environment in the South Pacific,

Stressing the particular importance to our region of General Assembly resolution 43/53 which recognized climate change as a common concern of humankind, General Assembly resolution 44/206 on the particular vulnerability of small island States to the possible adverse effects of sea-level rise on islands and coastal areas, particularly low-lying coastal areas,

Recalling the 1989 Majuro Declaration on Climate Change, the 1989 Male Declaration on Global Warming and Sea Level Rise and the 1990 Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Second World Climate Conference,

Having regard to General Assembly resolution 44/228 concerning the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and stressing the importance of South Pacific participation in this Conference,

Recalling the communique of the Twenty-first South Pacific Forum (1990) in which regional heads of government recognized that sustainable development is the key to the protection of the region's resources for future generations,

Welcoming the statements from the Twenty-first South Pacific Forum and Thirtieth South Pacific Conference on the need for strengthening cooperation in the region, including through the region's institutional arrangements, to address environmental concerns through enhanced capacity for SPREP,

Recalling also the 1990 ESCAP Ministerial Declaration on Environmentally Sound and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific; and noting the 1991 Declaration of the Environment Congress for Asia and the Pacific,

Emphasizing the uniqueness of the South Pacific region, its small land masses dispersed over the largest marine area in the world; its high degree of ecosystem and species diversity and vulnerability to natural disasters; the high degree of economic and cultural dependence on the natural environment; its diversity of cultures and languages, traditional practices and customs which are integral to the close and special relationship of Pacific peoples with their environment,

Recognizing that actions taken in one country or region should not adversely affect the environment of other countries or regions,

Deeply concerned about the vulnerability of the South Pacific to serious environmental threats, including climate change and sea-level rise, threats to marine living resources, and pollution which might result from nuclear testing, and importing, transporting, storing or destroying toxic and hazardous wastes or weapons, and, in particular, such threats generated from outside the region,

Stressing the urgency of reaching international agreement on measures to address these threats,

Emphasizing the common concerns among countries of the region and those of small island States in other regions,

Welcoming enhancement of the capacity and autonomy of SPREP,

Recalling the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty),

Welcoming the entry into force in 1990 of the 1976 Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (Apia Convention) and the 1986 Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (SPREP Convention) and related protocols, which between them form the framework for a comprehensive legal regime to protect the regional environment,

Noting with satisfaction the entry into force in 1991 of the Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Driftnets in the South Pacific (1989 Wellington Convention) which reflects strong concerns about this unsustainable fishing practice,

Recognizing the valuable assistance that many governments and international organizations, in particular UNEP through its Regional Seas Programme, have given to the protection of the South Pacific environment,

Committed to ensuring the continuation of the harmony which characterizes Pacific island peoples' relationship with their environment,

1. Declare our commitment to work individually and collectively, including through SPREP, to achieve sustainable development in the South Pacific region, in particular by making every effort to:

- meet the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

- promote equity in participation in ecologically sustainable development

- minimize any adverse environmental impacts of economic development through integrating environmental considerations with economic and sectoral planning and policies

- formulate resource use and development planning policies based on the precautionary principle;

2. Adopt, as an integral part of this declaration the 1991-1995 Action Plan for Managing the Environment of the South Pacific Region and undertake to work individually and collectively for its full implementation, in particular by:

- promoting ecologically sustainable resource use practices

- conserving biological diversity of the region and protecting critical ecosystems

- ensuring the ecologically sustainable use and conservation of terrestrial, freshwater and marine resources

- preventing, controlling and managing pollution and wastes

- assessing the environmental impact of development projects

- cooperation in international efforts to find solutions to pressing global environmental problems;

3. Recognize the importance of socio-economic factors in national and regional resource management activities and shall therefore endeavour to:

- adopt population policies and promote consumption patterns which foster sustainable development

- integrate health and nutrition considerations into development planning by taking steps to alleviate the impact of environmental degradation on community health and nutrition

- ensure the retention and use of traditional knowledge and practices which foster sustainable development

- increase, through education and training and information dissemination, the overall awareness and understanding of the environment and cultural heritage, to promote positive community attitudes towards the environment

- facilitate the transfer of affordable and appropriate technology, along with the associated development of human resources, skills and training, research and information sharing

- ensure effective application of funding from within national budgets and international sources to the protection of the environment and the achievement of ecologically sustainable development in the region

- explore opportunities for private sector contributions to implementing ecologically sustainable development in the region;

4. Affirm the right of individuals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be informed about environmental issues relevant to them, to have access to information, and to participate in the formulation and implementation of decisions likely to affect their environment;

5. Declare our commitment to work together, including through SPREP, to develop further, as needed, the legal framework for protecting the regional environment, to facilitate the implementation of relevant regional conventions, and further enhance regional and national capacities for sustainable development;

6. Call on the international community to:

- respect the right of the people of the South Pacific, as custodians of our fragile environment, to protect our region for present and future generations

- adopt additional measures to protect the environment, particularly in the areas of climate change, sustainable fishing practices and technologies, conservation of biological diversity and protection of marine areas from pollution from all sources

- support activities in the region to understand the global climate system

- cooperate in and assist regional and national efforts to implement sustainable development in the South Pacific

- recognize SPREP as the regional organization responsible for environmental coordination, protection and management for the South Pacific;

7. Call on the UNCED Preparatory Committee to take full account of the concerns expressed in the South Pacific Regional Statement to the Third Session of the UNCED Preparatory Committee.

SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL STATEMENT TO THE THIRD SESSION
OF THE UNCED PREPARATORY COMMITTEE

The members of the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) welcome the opportunity provided by the UNCED and the work of the Preparatory Committee to contribute to global understanding and achievement of ecologically sustainable development.

As part of their contribution, and pursuant to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 44/228, the SPREP members have undertaken regional preparations for UNCED, including a regional intergovernmental meeting at Ministerial level and the preparation of a regional report, to develop their views and perspectives on the issues on the Prepcom agenda.

The unique environment and cultural resources of the Pacific island countries have been noted at earlier meetings of the Preparatory Committee. This Statement elaborates on our earlier contributions to Prepcom and will be further elaborated in our individual National Reports, and in a Regional Report to be presented to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee.

This Statement provides the SPREP Regional perspective on what are, for us, the key issues under consideration.

As a region we can be characterized as islands and groups of islands sharing a common thread of evolutionary and human history. Many of us occupy some of the smallest habitable land masses on earth. As islands we share a unique vulnerability to natural and human-induced perturbations of both the local and global environments. We are also bound by our dependence on the physical characteristics and biological resources of the sea and the land and by our common reliance on local, and mostly vulnerable, supplies of freshwater.

As islands, mostly isolated from each other, by hundreds if not thousands of kilometres, our people have developed unique cultures and attitudes of self-reliance. Our diversity as a region is a source of strength, but like all islands we are vulnerable to environmental changes which can have catastrophic effects. The recent human history of the South Pacific contains examples of entire islands rendered uninhabitable by human environmental destruction. Unsustainable development threatens not only the livelihoods of Island people but also the islands themselves and the cultures they nourish.

These considerations naturally draw us together to seek international action on global environment issues which threaten countries in our region. Climate change, potential sea-level rise and climatic disruption are issues of grave concern to the region. Similarly, our reliance on the biological resources of our region is threatened by the patterns of large-scale exploitation of marine and terrestrial living resources. Concern to conserve our wealth of species and ecosystems underlies our interest in negotiations towards a global convention on the protection of biological diversity.

Our drive towards economic self-reliance is central to social and economic development of the region. However, many countries are already dependent on development assistance and we recognize that achieving our goal of a sustainable Pacific will require the ongoing assistance of the international community.

The following sections present our views and needs, focusing on international actions required.

1. OCEANS

1.1 The Pacific is the world's largest ocean, covering one third of the planet's surface. The health of the marine environment and its resources are integral to the very existence of Pacific communities.

1.2 To this end it is essential to:

1.2.1 recognize and respect the absolute dependence of Pacific island countries on the ocean for their very existence;

1.2.2 cease unsustainable fishing practices, particularly driftnet fishing;

1.2.3 prohibit the dumping of toxic, hazardous and nuclear substances in the Pacific;

1.2.4 prevent, reduce and control pollution which might result from nuclear testing, and from importing, transporting and storing or destroying toxic and hazardous wastes and weapons;

1.2.5 implement and endorse existing conventions covering marine pollution, international shipping and fisheries conservation and management;

1.2.6 recognize the environmental and social impacts of industrial scale fisheries and destructive fisheries practices on local coastal communities and fisheries activities;

1.2.7 use management systems based on ecosystems, rather than single species approaches;

1.2.8 assist Pacific island countries to prevent, minimize and control land-based sources of marine pollution;

1.2.9 recognize the role of the ocean as a carbon sink;

1.2.10 support efforts at international and regional levels towards management of high seas fisheries.

1.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage ocean issues through:

1.3.1 the implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan;

1.3.2 the development of National Environmental Management Strategies in SPREP members;

1.3.3 marine pollution monitoring and control (SPREP-POL) and oil pollution contingency planning at national and regional levels;

1.3.4 coastal management planning projects (marine park development and resource inventories) and the development of appropriate EIA procedures and capabilities;

1.3.5 completing ratification of, and implementing the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific (SPREP Convention) and related protocols.

2. LAND RESOURCES

2.1. The South Pacific is a region of thousands of islands, representing less than 0.4 per cent of the world's land resources, spread over one tenth of the world's surface. For most South Pacific societies, land resources are the basis for the majority of subsistence and commercial production. High population growth rates and the displacement of traditional land management systems by introduced agriculture, mining and forestry development have placed serious stress on land resources and communities which depend on them. Such trends are particularly serious on smaller islands, especially atolls, with limited land areas, poor soils and limited mineral and other resources. Because land-based activities also directly affect coastal and marine ecosystems, the promotion of environmentally sustainable land use practices must be seen as integral to sustainable coastal and marine resource development.

2.2 It is essential to:

2.2.1 recognize the integral relationship between land, freshwater and marine resources in the Pacific region;

2.2.2 take into account the impacts of land development and resource extraction projects on other resource users and environments;

2.2.3 recognize the value and role of forests as carbon sinks and in ameliorating the impacts of climate change;

2.2.4 promote sustainable agricultural and forestry practices. Existing programmes should be changed to ensure they are environmentally sound;

2.2.5 recognize and respect the rights of traditional land owners and users;

2.2.6 adhere to and further develop codes of conduct for transnational corporations operating in the region;

2.2.7 recognize the impact of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, particularly in industrialized countries;

2.2.8 ensure the proper management of mining so as to minimize the environmental impacts and maximize the local social and economic benefits;

2.2.9 recognize the critical contribution of subsistence agriculture to the real incomes and quality of life of many South Pacific communities, and its role in providing a basis for self-reliance;

2.2.10 recognize the need for development projects, including tourism and industry, to be undertaken in a manner considering proper environmental controls.

2.3 SPREP member countries are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage land resources through:

2.3.1 the implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan;

2.3.2 the development of appropriate EIA procedures and capabilities.

3. FRESHWATER

3.1 Water is critical to ecologically sustainable development, and freshwater resources are a major source of subsistence and cash incomes for many communities. Moreover some small islands have no surface water and extremely limited and fragile groundwater resources which, along with rainwater, are critical to sustainable settlement. Many are totally dependent on local resources with no options for importing water. These water resources are vulnerable to pollution, overuse and salinization due to increasing population, modern development and urbanization and changes in climatic patterns due to global climate change.

3.2. It is essential to:

3.2.1 recognize the constraints placed on development by limited freshwater resources and the vulnerability of such resources to contamination;

3.2.2 supply appropriate technology for reticulation and conservation of freshwater;

3.2.3 assist in development and conservation of the resource, including groundwater and surface water;

3.2.4 take account of South Pacific concerns in the design and maintenance of international water programmes.

3.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to manage and protect freshwater resources through;

3.3.1 the implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan;

3.3.2 the development of appropriate EIA procedures and capabilities;

3.3.3 pollution prevention and management programmes.

4. BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

4.1 The Pacific region is one of the world's centres of biological diversity. The western Pacific has the highest marine diversity in the world. Up to 3,000 different species may be found on a single reef. The many thousands of islands are surrounded by a rich complex of coastal ecosystems including mangroves, seagrass beds and estuarine lagoons. The evolution of island biogeography has led to a high endemism in terrestrial species, particularly on larger islands which can also have high biological diversity. Although some of the smaller islands have extremely low diversity and little or no endemism, they nevertheless have a high rate of species endangerment. Islands, in addition, are particularly vulnerable to the impact of introduced species. The maintenance of the region's biological diversity is critically important to ecologically sustainable development throughout the region and the world.

4.2. It is essential to:

4.2.1 recognize the fundamental importance of their biological resources to the peoples of the South Pacific;

4.2.2 conclude a comprehensive biological diversity convention, taking into account the unqiue characteristics and needs of the Pacific region;

4.2.3 provide funding and technical assistance to Pacific island countries to meet provisions under existing international agreements (e.g. CITIES);

4.2.4 assist Pacific island countries to identify and assess their biological resources;

4.2.5 recognize that the maintenance of biological diversity is important not only in undisturbed terrestrial and marine ecosystems, but also in agricultural and urban areas;

4.2.6 assist the region to develop agricultural, forestry and fishing practices which encourage the maintenance of the region's biological diversity.

4.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage these issues by:

4.3.1 the development of an Action Strategy for Nature Conservation in the South Pacific;

4.3.2 implementation of the 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan in accordance with the Action Strategy above;

4.3.3. completing ratification of, and implementing, the Convention on the Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (Apia Convention) and the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific (SPREP Convention) which are now in force;

4.3.4 regional programmes for the conservation of marine turtles, avifauna and marine mammals;

4.3.5 implementing an umbrella biological diversity programme to provide the means to implement the Action Strategy.

5. CLIMATE CHANGE

5.1 The islands of the South Pacific are especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and potential sea-level rise, a problem to which the region's contribution has been negligible. This vulnerability is a result of the following characteristics:

5.1.1 low-lying islands and atolls;

5.1.2 concentration of populations, development and infrastructure on the coastal zones of larger, higher islands;

5.1.3 historic and current high risk to extreme natural events (e.g. cyclones, droughts, other climatic variations, earthquakes and tectonic movements);

5.1.4 dependence on limited areas of arable soil for agriculture production;

5.1.5 dependence on coastal marine resources.

5.1.6 limited potable surface and groundwater resources.

5.2 SPREP members call for immediate action to reduce significantly greenhouse gas emissions and to conclude urgently an effective Convention on Climate Change.

5.3 It is essential to:

5.3.1 ensure that Pacific island countries do not bear disproportionate costs associated with global climate change;

5.3.2 provide funding and technical assistance for the implementation of measures that will enable island countries of the Pacific region to cope with sea-level rise and changes in climate patterns which will have detrimental effects on agriculture, water quality, health, marine and terrestrial living resources;

5.3.3 provide financial assistance to enable Pacific island countries to participate in international discussions on climate change and response options;

5.3.4 assist with monitoring climate change and sea-level rise;

5.3.5 promote activities related to better scientific understanding of the issues, including the Tropical Ocean and Global Atmosphere - Coupled Ocean Atmosphere Response Experiment (TOGA-COARE) of the World Climate Research Programme;

5.3.6 promote appropriate energy efficient technologies;

5.3.7 provide assistance in designing rational response strategies to address environmental, social and economic impacts;

5.4 SPREP members are prepared to make a contribution to international efforts to limit the effects of climate change by:

5.4.1 controlling emissions of greenhouse gases;

5.4.2 managing their national resource base on a sustainable basis;

5.4.3 cooperating in international efforts to monitor climate change in the Pacific; and,

5.4.4 implementing development strategies and policies which take into consideration climate change factors.

6. WASTES, TOXIC AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES

6.1 The physiographic characteristics of Pacific islands, the oceanic nature of their location and dependence on a marine and limited terrestrial resource base, including limited availability of freshwater, makes them highly vulnerable to contamination by toxic and hazardous wastes and chemicals, and radioactive materials. The history of waste disposal in the region has led to a growing appreciaton of the dangers this poses to the Pacific environment and its communities. SPREP members reject the perception that the region should continue to be used as a dumping ground for such materials. This position is reinforced by the acknowledged past and current impacts on the health and welfare of our island peoples resulting from such action by countries and corporations from outside the region.

6.2 It is essential to:

6.2.1 prevent, reduce and control pollution which might result from nuclear testing and from importing, transporting, storing and disposal of toxic and hazardous wastes and weapons and implement the relevant international conventions;

6.2.2 cooperate in the implementation of the prior consent procedure for the export of toxic chemical substances to the region as provided for in the London Guidelines;

6.2.3 provide technical, legal and administrative resources for the adoption of clean production technologies, the prevention of pollution and management of wastes;

6.2.4 generate and disseminate information on the sources, levels, amounts, kinds, trends and effects of pollution and waste within the Pacific region; and,

6.2.5 strengthen the capabilities of national and regional institutions to carry out pollution monitoring and research and to formulate and apply pollution prevention, control and abatement measures;

6.2.6 address the consequences of past activities which have generated toxic and hazardous waste products that have damaged the health and livelihood of island peoples.

6.3 SPREP members are committed to strengthening national and regional capabilities to plan and manage these issues through the following measures:

6.3.1 developing and implementing appropriate legislative and administrative measures for the prevention, control and monitoring of pollution and management of wastes at national and regional levels;

6.3.2 cooperating on a regional basis for the prevention, control and monitoring of pollution and hazardous wastes; in particular to ensure that the Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment of the South Pacific Region (the SPREP Convention), including its Protocols on dumping and pollution emergencies, are ratified and implemented by respective members;

6.3.3 minimizing the amount of waste produced as a consequence of increased industrialization by members of the region, and maximizing recycling of such wastes; and,

6.3.4 cooperating in international efforts to generate and disseminate information on the sources, levels, amounts, kind, trends and effects of pollution and waste within the region.

7. CROSS SECTORAL ISSUES

7.1 Financial resources

Most countries in the region are highly dependent on development assistance. While achieving a high level of economic independence and growth is the objective of all countries, the achievement of ecologically sustainable development will require both new types of international funding and adjustment of national development policies. This assistance and these policies must be based on a clearly defined set of individual island needs.

SPREP members seek from the international community a recognition that all development assistance, whether new or ongoing, shoud be directed towards ecologically sustainable forms of development. Development assistance should also provide for the protection and restoration of sensitive or threatened environments. This could be achieved in part by donor governments applying environmental guidelines to assistance projects which are consistent with their own national environmental guidelines.

The region also urges greater coordination between donors and implementing agencies in seeking to meet priority regional needs.

One specific funding requirement which needs to be addressed by UNCED is the provision of technical assistance to developing countries of the region, on request, to enable them to accede to and implement existing international environment agreements.

The South Pacific region through SPREP is actively seeking to identify and coordinate new and additional financial resources for the implementation of ecologically sustainable development.

7.2 Transfer of technology

The Pacific island countries are not well endowed with the technical infrastructure necessary to promote and achieve the effective transfer of new or novel technologies. Even in established technologies, many countries lack the necessary capabilities to provide ongoing maintenance and repair. In many cases, the major requirement for technology in the South Pacific is in the area of management and technical expertise relevant to the ecologically sustainable development of natural resources. Other specific areas of need for environmentally sound technologies include combating pollution, coastal engineering, freshwater reticulation and quality control and energy production.

The Pacific island countries require international assistance in building local capacity to assess, apply, adapt, absorb and maintain environmentally sound and appropriate technologies.

The Pacific island countries would also welcome increased technical cooperation with developed countries as well as with developing countries, particularly in the fields of traditional technologies and on their experiences in adapting and adopting new forms of environmentally sound technology.

The SPREP members are actively engaged in the development of local education and training institutions which can form the basis of increased international efforts in the field of technology transfer.

7.3 Institutions and legal issues

The legal and institutional framework for the achievement of ecologically sustainable development in the Pacific island countries largely exists in the current multilateral and regional conventions and organizations. In

particular the framework for environmental protection at the regional level exists in the form of the SPREP and Apia Conventions and in the SPREP Secretariat. SPREP members see regional cooperation as crucial for addressing environmental concerns in the South Pacific and have accordingly taken steps to enhance the South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme and give it appropriate status.

The likelihood of successful ecologically sustainable development would be significantly enhanced by improved coordination among United Nations agencies and NGOs dealing with the coastal and marine environment. This should include improved working relationships among UNEP, UNESCO, the International Oceanographic Commission (IOC), IMO, FAO, IAEA, and the Office for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the Secretariat. This coordination should be reflected on a regional level and include regional Pacific organizations.

7.4 Energy

Because of the absence of proven fossil fuel reserves in all Pacific island countries, except Papua New Guinea, increasing dependency on imported fossil fuel is seen as a major constraint to ecologically sustainable development. The region's dispersed population and the long distances between major population centres make efficient energy production and distribution a fundamental problem for the region. The develoment of renewable energy alternatives and energy conservation is therefore a priority.

The link between existing forms of energy production, current world consumption levels and the onset of climate change is not lost on the countries of the South Pacific.

Our greatest need is for economically sustainable, clean, renewable, moderate scale energy production technology to initially complement, and eventually replace, existing sources of energy.

We recognize that a coordinated global effort to develop and disseminate the appropriate technology is an urgent need, not just for the Pacific, but for all developing countries. Combined with a new approach to energy planning, demand management and pricing, the issue of new energy technologies is one of the most fundamental issue of ecologically sustainable development.

7.5 Population and environmental degradation

The Pacific island countries have a culturally diverse and highly dispersed population. Population problems are generally highly localized and often associated with urbanization and growth in established centres. In some countries the local population is supplemented with large numbers of tourists, placing additional pressure on local infrastructure and the environment. Population density and population growth rates in some countries of the region are as high as those anywhere in the world. Other countries are suffering from a different problem: substantial loss of population through emigration to metropolitan centres creating severe human resource shortages.

The Pacific island countries look to the international community to continue to provide guidance and programmes in the area of populaton planning.

For their own part the SPREP members have adoptd, as part of the SPREP Action Plan 1991-1995, a commitment to providing information and access to international population programmes for those Pacific countries which are suffering the adverse effects of population pressure.

7.6 Traditional practices

Many traditional Pacific island resource management practices were relatively sustainable. They were based on renewable inputs, the maintenance of biological diversity, were non-polluting and did not require imported energy inputs. Despite widespread monetization of Pacific island economies, these systems still provide the bulk of the real income of most rural, and a significant proportion of urban, communities. In short, there exist alongside one another, communities of almost entirely monetized and those which still enjoy a high degree of subsistence affluence obtained from traditional resource management systems.

The international community, and in particular the developed countries and transnational corporations which have dealings with the region, need to recognize that these two cultures, a western style economy and a traditional society, exist side by side, and in dynamic tension, in the Pacific island countries.

Sensitivity is required to ensure that developments imposed or fostered from outside the region meet the needs and take account of South Pacific cultures.

Developments which are compatible with traditional practice and knowledge are, in the Pacific, more likely to be sustainable than those which take a narrow economic, albeit environmentally sensitive, approach.

7.7 Poverty

The link between poverty and the environment is being addressed here for the first time at a regional level. Poverty is an emerging issue in a number of Pacific island countries but needs to be understood and addressed against the background of traditional lifestyles and economic change. While conventional economic and social indicators demonstrate that a significant percentage of Pacific island populations are at poverty level, the true picture is clouded by the fact that a high proportion of people still live subsistence lifestyles. For many of our people it is the health and general social indicators of poverty which tell the real story, not the purely economic indicators. As has already been stated many communities still enjoy a high degree of subsistence affluence obtained from traditional resource management systems.

Indeed, it appears that urbanization and the shift to a monetary economy are part of the problem. Threats to viable subsistence lifestyles, such as the rapid depletion of natural resources through over-exploitation, are apparent in many countries. This is contributing to the emergence of poverty

in our region. International action to address the linkage between poverty and environmental degradation must address the impact of unsustainable economic development on traditional, subsistence cultures.

The issue of equity, both within and between generations, is central to the environment and development debate for SPREP members. Any set of general principles on ecologically sustainable development must contain an expression of this concept.

7.8 Environmental health

Small isolated communities are particularly vulnerable to the rapid spread of infection and to the adverse effects of local environmental degradation. In the Pacific island countries, environmental health problems are strongly linked to the supply and quality of freshwater and to the introduction of toxins into the general environment. High incidences of nutritional disorders and nutrition-related non-communicable diseases, due to the deterioration of traditional wildfood and agricultural systems is also seen as a major environmental health issue.

SPREP members stress that the international community has an obligation to developing countries of the region in relation to the control of hazardous substances. It must ensure that those who would propose to introduce or produce in the region substances potentially damaging to human health, provide to the people and governments of the region sufficient information on those activities so that informed decisions can be made. Further, proponents of potentially hazardous activities must accept an obligation to eliminate any potentially negative effects on the people of the region and accept liability for unforeseen negative effects which might occur.

SPREP members emphasize that that the region is neither a dumping nor testing ground for toxic and hazardous substances nor for outmoded technologies which generate such substances.

SPREP membres also emphasize that the international community must support development which promotes traditional food system management and maintenance and minimizes the import and promotion of nutritionally inferior foods, the increased consumption of which appears to be the main causal factor in nutrition-related poor health.

7.9 Education and public awareness

The need for education on environmental issues in order to raise public awareness and motivation is common to all Pacific island countries. Education also has an important role in building upon the skills of indigenous people in the area of environmental and natural resource management. All countries of the region have a need for more education about environmental issues, both at a grassroots level and through the formal education system. The training of technicians, scientists and decision-makers to enable them to deal with the issues of ecologically sustainable development is also an important educational requirement.

The 1991-1995 SPREP Action Plan emphasizes the importance of, and need for, access to environmental information for all groups, in particular women and youth. This will enhance the management of resources and environment within the region.

Pacific island countries need the support of the international community, particularly in these areas of education and public awareness.

It is also essential that the international community is made aware of the unique perspectives and problems of the Pacific island countries. This is seen as an integral part of the process towards achieving sustainable development for the people of the South Pacific.